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ABSTRACT

The first section of this document relates a case involving governance problems at a private education institution. The second section gives teaching notes for the use of this case in any course focusing on leadership, organizational governance, or general management or in various topical courses. In the case recounted, an institution recognized for its collegial governance and administrative team leadership began to experience management and financial problems. To deal with these problems, the Board of Governors decided to create the position of president. The first president resigned after a year; the second resigned before the end of his first year. A team of three university professors was requested by the board chairman to evaluate the second president's performance; documents were analyzed, institutional assessment interviews with the president and administrators were conducted, and recommendations to the board and its constituents were presented. The issues that emerged were related to the differing governance philosophies and leadership styles that produced conflict among the institutional participants. The teaching notes give guidelines on the teaching objectives of the case, the position of the case in the course, assignment questions, and discussion strategies. An analysis of the issues involved is also provided. Five references are listed. (DCS)

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BUREAUCRATIC VERSUS LOOSE COUPLING GOVERNANCE: OWNERSHIP OR CHAOS IN MANAGING CONFLICT?

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BUREAUCRATIC VERSUS LOOSE COUPLING GOVERNANCE:
OWNERSHIP OR CHAOS IN MANAGING CONFLICT?

> Probably more has been written and less is known about leadership than any other topic in the behavioral sciences.
>
> Warren Bennis

A private education institution recognized for its collegial governance and administrative team leadership began to experience management and financial problems in recent years. To deal with these problems, the Board of Governors decided to create the position of president - a role in which academic and managerial responsibilities would increase organizational controls while the collegial style leadership of three teaching principals in charge of the lower- middle- and upper-school divisions remained. During this period of change, two presidents were hired. The first president, a woman, resigned after a year on the job. As one of a team of three university professors requested by the Board Chairman to evaluate the second president's performance, this case writer had the opportunity to analyze documents, conduct institutional assessment interviews with the president and administrators, and finally to present recommendations to the Board and its constituents.

Ensuring events and activities will illustrate the issues which emerged as differing governance philosophies and leadership styles produced conflict among the institutional participants. The critical issue of the case focuses on the demand for collegial leadership as the unique asset of the institution while fundamental financial and management functions continued to be loosely administered and coordinated. The purpose of the case is to examine the institutional governance and leadership functions and to apply decision analysis skills to a decision dilemma in one actual setting.

Background

Leadership has consistently been a priority topic of research and theory in education as well as in business and industry. Early research on leadership concentrated on identifying personal traits of administrators until the list became too large and varying to justify salient conclusions. In turn, situational theories of leadership became prominent under the belief that no inherent leadership traits exist, just leader styles of behavior that may change dependent upon situations. The issue of making generalizations about all leaders was not resolved, and recently research activity on successful administrators has renewed interest on who the leader is regardless of situation as a determinant of what effective leaders look like. What is more clear today is that characteristics of effective leaders are difficult to measure or teach.

In this situation, the introduction of hierarchical or compliance leadership as an organizational expectation met with serious conflict by those who remained wedded to their belief in participative management style and behavior. What still remains uncertain about the successive turnover of two president's is whether their particular leader traits contributed to the situational dilemma or whether the situational dilemma contributed to their frustrations and limited influence in meeting the challenges of the position.

Definitions of Leadership

1. Accomplishment of Organizational Tasks - getting the job done by influencing others to committing themselves to these tasks.
2. Expert Power - Perceived by followers as one whose expertise or competencies are demonstrated in the context of organizational problem solving capacity.

3. The activity of influencing people to strive willingly for group goals.

4. Management - Mental and physical effort to coordinate diverse activities to achieve desired results through the process of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. In contrast, leadership is defined as natural and learned ability, skill and personal characteristics to conduct interpersonal relations which influence people to take desired actions.

   Leadership includes, the ability to counsel, manage conflict, inspire loyalty, and imbue subordinates with a desire to remain on the job.

Turbulence and Resignations -

Outcomes for School Presidents

Excerpts from a series of evaluation reports by outside observers and one of the school presidents during the period of 1980 to 1983 are presented below to illustrate leadership and organizational problems confronting the Board of Governors. It must be acknowledged that many positive features and activities of the institutional participants will be included in class interaction sessions about the case.

The first president's final report to the Board on December 6, 1980 particularly emphasized that:

> The administration attrition rate is dangerously high and closely related to strong faculty resistances to organizational leadership and the tasks of quality education.

On February 10, 1981, the president of a similar private institution in another state made his report to the Board after a visitation. Noteable in the report were the following statements:

The academy's most pressing need is for centralized leadership. It is no coincidence that every successful organization is led by a chief executive, one who coordinates its resources, articulates its priorities, and serves as both the symbol of order and the facilitator of reform. Serious problems of organizations are:

1. There is a pervasive confusion of rules and jurisdictional responsibilities among the staff. The resulting climate is one of divisiveness, personal/political intrigue, and underlying mistrust. Most of the staff seem demoralized and worn down by such an environment but no one has enough power to stop or change it.

2. The lack of coordination among the three different parts of the school creates a schizophrenic institution. This lack of coordination is perceived by both the faculty and those parents I met.
3. Schoolwide policies are inconsistent and many administrative procedures suffer from duplication of effort, disorganization, or simply incomplete knowledge. Admissions procedures, public relations, financial matters, among others, fall into one or more of these categories.

A report to the Board by a group of evluators from a nearby sister institution on February 24, 1982 durng the second president's tenure listed several tensions among which were:

Low morale, distrust, high student faculty and administrator dropout rates, low faculty salaries, and the inconsistency between a collegial governance philosophy and the press for institutional efficiency through the role functions of a president.

On March 22, 1982, the upper-school principal made the following report to the Board:

Philosophically, the academy is committed to collegial and particpatory decision-making, and a collegial administrative style has been historically characteristic of our institution.

The choice of the Board in 1979 to go the route of a president and a hierarchical style of administration was, I believe, related to a sensed need for greater efficiency.

What we have experienced is an increasing conflict between the hierarchical system of having a president and the constituencies expectations of, and commitment to, a collegial style of administration and operation.

Further, I do not believe the academy can financially afford the luxury of four administrators for a student population of 375.

It is my present belief that what we do need is a team of competent persons hired to do the specific tasks outlined in the president's job description, but working together as a team, accountable to the three principals who are hired to be the educational leaders of the school.

Such a team would need to include the following persons:

1. The Three Principals (Upper, Middle and Lower Schools)
2. Recruiter and Public Relations Expert
3. Fund-Raiser/Development Officer
4. Treasurer/Bookkeeper
5. Building Maintenance Engineer

(It needs to be noted that all of these positions except a recruiter/PR expert already exist within the present structure in addition to the president. As these people carry out their responsibilities, it becomes less and less clear what the president's role actually is and why we need a person in that role at a salary of $20,000+.)

President Takes Charge

The second president hired in July of 1981 was faced immediately with student recruitment and fund development problems. Enrollment was down substantially from that calculated in the budget. A deficit of over $40,000 existed with no fat to trim in other categories. At the same time, the upper-school principal resigned in September in frustration after two years of constant pressure from the faculty. It is to be noted also that all of the administrators in the institution's history were teaching-principals promoted with little academic or administrative training and experience. He announced these cutbacks to the faculty on August 28, 1982:

1. Administrative assistant to president was laid-off.
2. Bookstore supervisor was laid-off.
3. One upper-school lanuage class was cut.
4. One upper-school social studies class was cut.
5. One upper-school instrumental music class was cut.
6. One middle-school physical science class was cut.
7. Business classes were reduced to two typing classes (one middle school and one upper school.)

It was called by several faculty members and the school administration, the August Bloodbath.

The second president, in attempting to foster a more structured work environment in the ensuing months, tried to deal with such major discrepancies as:

1. Uncoordinated budget procedures and functions.
2. Uncoordinated curriculum planning and development.
3. Diffuse roles and responsibilities of administrators, faculty, and support staff.
4. Unsystematic student recruitment and fund-raising planning.

By March of 1982, pressure from the school administrators and faculty members about his leadership performance prompted the Board Chairman to requst a university team to study documents and to interview the president and the school principals. During this period, the president resigned but agreed to stay on the job until May of 1982.

On his decision to resign, he stated:

> Frankly, the accumulated and historical problems, the lack of agreement among the 25 members of the Board regarding the directions and problems facing the school, the lack of authority in the presidential role (e.g. all hiring and firing of teachers was reserved as a duty of the principals), and my own personal inability to administer in a collegial style and structure prompted the decision.

Should the Board seek a new president, and under what appropriate organizational changes?

What are your feelings about this option?

Should the Board consider other administrative arrangements and under what appropriate organizational changes?

What are your feelings about this option?

Identify the advantages, disadvantages, and potential problems to consider in implementing your proposals.

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Teaching Notes

Teaching Objectives of the Case

This case illustrates the problem of individual and consensus decision-making when an institution is confused by its sharing governance philosophy and its actual leadership and organizational problems eminating from a lack of hierarchical structure and functions. The case further indicates the difficulties of defining quality leaderhsip and the fit of leadership qualities to governance and decision alternatives.

The objective is to involve students in analysis, insights, and decision-making about the issues of the case which require managerial attention.

Positioning the Case in the Course

The case can be used in any course focusing on leadership, organizational governance, or general management. The case can also be used as a part of courses dealing with topical themes focusing on policy formulation, conflict management, decision processes, group process skills, and fund raising.

The positioning of the case within management courses is flexible depending on the issue(s) the instructor desires to emphasize. Some anticipations are:

1. Early in the course to stress questions on governance and leadership styles.

2. Later in the semester if emphasis on policy development and plans conflict management is desired.

3. Either early or later in the semester depending on where you place extensive emphasis on student abilities to analyze cases and to develop a variety of assignments related to student characteristics in processing information in class or out of class work situations.

Assignment Questions

General Questions

1. If the Board decides to seek a new president, what leadership requisites should it consider? What appropriate organizational changes must also be made?

This teaching note was prepared by Professor Joseph P. Caliguri of the University of Missouri at Kansas City.

2. What other administrative arrangements can the Board consider lieu of a president? What appropriate organizational changes must also be made?

Specific Questions

1. What must be done to correct the deficiencies in basic management functions and technical areas which have emerged under the present collegial governance system? By Whom? How?

2. Are problem-solving models useful for application to decision dilemmas? For development of analysis skills?

Teaching Strategy - Discussion

Usually class interest can be evoked by asking the question, do we have any universal agreement on defining quality leadership? Students are apt to suggest personality characteristics are traits that identify effective leaders such as out-going, task-oriented, good communicator, gets along with people, trustworthy, honest. Students also become divided on what can be gained by training and what depends on growth in maturity, prespective, and experience in regard to effective leadership. Another point of contention resides in fitting situational task competencies with sensitivity to employees needs, preferences, and ways of doing things in order to develop their cooperation or support in achieving organizational goals.

From a teaching perspective, I try to connect the quality leadership theme to purpose, passion, and principle. In this respect, other discussion questions which can be used are:

1. Purpose - What do leaders stand for and believe in contrast to their behavioral style? ... What do they hope to accomplish and how do they communicate it in a meaningful way to others?

2. Passion or Emotionality

   What are leader beliefs about organizations, people and the strength of these beliefs?

   How are these beliefs used in developing ability to gain commitement and loyalty from others?

3. Principle

   Are the principles of integrity, fairness, sensitiveness, and forthrightness utilized in promoting the welfare of employees in deference to self-interest or self-aggrandizement?

After the overall theory oriented decision and analysis of leadership and governance themes, the focus is switched to the decision dilemma of the case - a board of governors seeking solutions for its critical problems from external evaluators over a period of three years. Its activities tend to illustrate the "muddling through" consideration

of alternatives reinforced by periodic rather than monthly meetings in order to avoid upsetting the status quo. Therefore, the incremental model of decision-making is used first in the form of classroom discussion and blackboard analysis. Key points are emphasized in terms of the limited range of alternatives aiding the preservation of the status quo, favoring of those in power, and accomodating of diverse values through consensus decsion-making.

The rational model of decision-making as an ideal for intellectual analysis or a "sensible way to make decisions" can be used to demonstrate to students the pros and cons of how decisions should be made in the selection of the best course of action when a deicision-maker has a clear goal to be achieved, can identify the various alternatives that can be used to achieve the goal, and is able to assign positive and negative consequences to the various possible outcomes for each alternative. One decision model suggested for students is a two-phase approach: in the analysis phase the facts of the case are placed into a framework so that problem clusters may be sorted out and a central problem developed; in the synthesis phase a reasonable number of feasible alternatives are developed and evaluated in terms of advantages and disadvantages followed by selection of an alternative and development of an implementation plan.

The focus is on whether to continue the current system of governance or to change to a highly structured governance system or to devise a mix of hierarchical and collegial governance functions.

Key actors representing the institution can be role played. Utilizing decision models presented by the university team to the Board, we can guesstimate (dependent on subjective judgment or the seeking of more objective information), on the basis of a 0-100%, the probability of success in taking a risk to continue the current system of governance. Next, the probability of success in seeking solid support for a mixed hierarchical/collegial form of governance.

In line with the subject of problem solving skill goals emphasizing the student's ability to analyze the case, discussion moves to writing reports according to decision model flow diagrams, and to presentation of student analyses to the class. To provide for student preferences on personalistic approaches, they can choose to work along or in pairs or in groups of three. Some students prefer to perceive with their intellect and process the information reflectively as individuals or on a team basis. Other students, who prefer to perceive concretely with their senses and feelings and process information actively, may desire to construct role playing scenarios. In classes over 15, teamwork reports or written exam requirments can be considered. Other problem solving paradigms may also be presented depending on the instructor's experience and textbook selection sources.

Analysis

A private educational institution seeking to sustain a collegial uniqueness which included parents and students in its governance activities illustrates several issues affecting leadership and fundamental organizational functions. More to the point, traditional

and emerging value systems affecting the work ethic and organizational operations for student educational outcomes may be discerned. Essentially, the qustion can be posed about the rhetoric and the reality of commitment or dedication to the ownership inherent in sharing power or responsibilities to achieve organizational goals and controls. Where and what are the incentives for people to create and sustain collaborative models while individual achievement needs and goals are thwarted and furthermore, organizational rewards are based on individual accomplishments. Many of the questions can be directed toward behavior science research and theories for assistance in devising solutions to employee motivation, performance assessment, leadership styles, organizatonal development, and change processes.

Yet, the turbulent state of affairs exemplified in the tone of this case indicate continued conflict on the issues of governance and leadership.

One inference from these issues seems to be that the magnitude of the problem has produced a domino theory of problem development - a middle managmeent principals' team seeking to preserve a collegial leadership style by delegating the responsibilities of basic management functions to a president or to specialists for these basic functions. In turn, cost efficiency concenrs, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation procedures and processes are loosely performed and affecting the equilibrium of the institution and its direction.

Essentially then, does the situation call for a return to a more traditional work environment and value system in the perspective of an organizational good? Or, can collegial or participative management function be viewed as a personal goal to be fitting in where appropriate for ambitious risk-taking leaders to meet the needs of employees, parents, and students? One inference from this point is the suggestion that external evaluation should be replaced by an employees' survey designed by employees with the assistance of a hired or volunteer survey consultant. High support of students is generated by the theme that employees know the real problems and where the survey should look for answers. In addition, it would provide an opportunity to engage and develop employees' problem-solving capabilities and the use of these capabilities to find fresh solutions for organizational change.

When discussion is shifted to decision models, there is apt to be sharp agreement from students about incremental or "muddling through" decision-making on the part of a board of governors which generally meets quarterly.

Moving to the rational model of student decision-making, discussion is directed toward its appeal when actors are rational and ethical in deference to the politics of decision-makers using power or influence strategies and tactics when disagreements over goals occurs.

Class interaction at this point opens up opportunity to link in change concepts which have direct bearing on decision processes. Several questions on change concepts can be introduced dependent on the level of class expertise.

Why do people resist change? What is the nature of resistenceto change? Some students focus on the theme of people feeling that involvement or a stake in the decision affecting them is the critical issue. Refocusing on the case, students argue that mediation or conflict management mechanisms are strangely lacking in a situation which emphasizes collegiality as its institutional uniqueness, and that it is still feasible for the institution to develop planning, management, and leadership functions and competencies vis-a-vis professional development programs.

In the final juncture when analyses of decision models are summarized, the following points are made:

The rational model for decision-making is attractive but its patterns of analysis are difficult or can be inappropriate as exemplified by such concerns as: precise consequences may depend on future events which may or may not happen; consequences may depend on future decisions; or the complexity of having too many alternatives and consequences to deal with as a result of the magnitude of a problem. Students, though, generally support the use of this model as an ideal.

On the other hand, students' interaction was provoked by the blackboard presentation of a group problem-solving skills model utilizing the concept of linking pin leadership. Of most import, an opportunity is provided to drive home the points that group problem-solving skills development is more important than promoting solution-mindedness which usually results in win/lose group interaction struggles.

In my situation, graduate students in educational administration are working in schools and community agencies. Many of them are prone toward perceiving impulsively, utilizing feelings and senses in the processing of case information. Others show a proclivity toward intellectual detachment and process information reflectively. I found it more feasible to use the role playing scenario of the president illustrating the linking pin leadership to his/her board and the Board processing the presentation toward a consensus decision. Other kinds of delivery techniques can be used depending on the instructor's perceptions of class characteristics and interest in how students learn best. This particular class showed a marked tendency toward perceiving the case information through feelings and senses. They were particularly uncertain about collegial governance and loose administrative functions and at the same time a conservative attitude toward risk taking behavior was apparent as they strongly supported the alternative of hierarchical governance.

One may relate risk perception here to antecedent conditioning in bureaucratic experience backgrounds of these students as an influence factor.

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